

09/028,546

I  
1. (PREVIOUSLY PRESENTED) A method of preparing, transporting and dispensing food between a series of remote locations, the method comprising the steps of:

preparing the food for consumption at a first location;  
apportioning the food onto a plurality of trays at the first location;  
stacking the trays in a manually maneuverable rack, and providing the rack with a predetermined stacking arrangement of particular dimensions;  
loading the maneuverable rack onto a refrigerated vehicle for transportation to a second remote location;  
transferring the maneuverable rack, at the second location, into a moveable receptacle comprising at least one of heating and cooling means, and the receptacle being configured to receive at least one of the plurality of racks;  
relocating the moveable receptacle to a desired position;  
activating at least one of the heating and cooling means prior to dispensing of the food trays to consumers;  
dispensing the food trays to the consumers for consumption;  
collecting and re-stacking the trays in the rack situated within the receptacle;

removing the at least one maneuverable rack from the moveable receptacle; and [for transportation of the rack back to the first location]  
loading the at least one maneuverable rack back onto the transfer vehicle for transportation of the rack from the second location back to the first location.

2. (CURRENTLY AMENDED) A method of preparing and transporting food for rethermalization comprising the steps of:

at a first location:  
preparing food;  
apportioning the prepared food onto at least a plurality one of trays;  
loading the at least plurality one of trays, bearing the apportioned food, onto a manually maneuverable rack for receiving and supporting [at] the plurality of trays in a predetermined alignment;  
providing a refrigerated transfer vehicle for transporting the rack, loaded with the at least plurality one of trays bearing the apportioned food, from the first location to a second location spaced from the first location;

09/928,546

loading the rack, stacked with the at least plurality one of trays, onto a refrigerated transfer vehicle for transportation to a second location;

transporting the rack, containing the at least plurality one of trays bearing the apportioned food, in the transfer vehicle to the second location;

at the second location:

transferring the rack from the transfer vehicle to a moveable receptacle at the second location; and

rethermalizing the apportioned food while the at least plurality one of trays [is] are supported by the rack at the second location.

3. (CURRENTLY AMENDED) The method as claimed in claim 2, further comprising the step of, following sufficient regeneration of the apportioned food at the second location, distributing the at least plurality one of trays bearing the apportioned food to a consumer for consumption.

4. (CURRENTLY AMENDED) The method as claimed in claim 3, further comprising the step of utilizing the rack to recover the at least plurality one of trays from the consumer, following consumption of a desired portion of the apportioned food by the consumer.

5. (CURRENTLY AMENDED) The method as claimed in claim 4, further comprising the step of, following recovery of the at least plurality one of trays from the consumer, transporting the recovered at least plurality one of trays back to the first location via use of the rack.

6-8. (CANCELED)

9. (CURRENTLY AMENDED) The method as claimed in claim 2, further comprising the step of using a mobile trolley incorporating heating/cooling means as the receptacle to facilitate rethermalization of the apportioned food on the at least plurality one of trays.

10. (CURRENTLY AMENDED) The method as claimed in claim 2, further comprising the step of using one of:

a mobile trolley incorporating heating/cooling means as the receptacle; the mobile trolley coupled in operable combination with a separate heating cooling means; and

the heating cooling means to facilitate rethermalization of the apportioned food on the at least plurality one of trays.

09/928,546

11. (CURRENTLY AMENDED) The method as claimed in claim 2, further comprising the step of loading [[a]] the plurality of trays, each bearing apportioned food, onto the rack prior to transporting the rack, loaded with the plurality of trays bearing the apportioned food, to the second location by way of a transport vehicle.

12. (CURRENTLY AMENDED) The method as claimed in claim 2, further comprising the step of placing the transported rack, loaded with the at least plurality one of trays bearing the apportioned food, in storage prior to rethermalizing the apportioned food of the at least plurality one of trays.

13-15. (CANCELED)

6 16. (PREVIOUSLY AMENDED) The method as claimed in claim 2, further comprising the step of using the moveable receptacle to dispense the plurality of trays, containing the apportioned food, to consumers for consumption with the rack contained within the moveable receptacle during dispensing of the plurality of trays.

7 17. (PREVIOUSLY AMENDED) The method as claimed in claim 16, further comprising the step of, following consumption of the apportioned food by the consumers, collecting the plurality of trays with the rack located within the moveable receptacle.

8 18. (PREVIOUSLY AMENDED) The method as claimed in claim 17, further comprising the steps of:

removing the rack from the moveable receptacle following collection of the plurality of trays; and

returning the plurality of trays and the rack back to the first location for reuse while leaving the receptacle at the second location.

19-22. (CANCELED)

14 23. (PREVIOUSLY AMENDED) The method of claim 32, the rack, having a predetermined stacking arrangement of particular dimensions.

15 24. (CURRENTLY PRESENTED) The method as claimed in claim 32, the heating system and the cooling system being either located in the receptacle or being demountably coupled to the receptacle.

25. (CANCELED)

16 26. (CURRENTLY AMENDED) The method as claimed in claim 32, further comprising the step of:

09/928,546

dispensing the at least plurality one of trays bearing the apportioned food to a consumer for consumption of the food.

<sup>16</sup> 27. (CURRENTLY AMENDED) The method as claimed in claim 26, further comprising the step of:

collecting the at least plurality one of trays after the at least plurality one of trays has have been dispensed to a consumer for consumption of the food.

<sup>17</sup> 28. (CURRENTLY AMENDED) The method as claimed in claim <sup>16</sup> 27, further comprising the step of:

returning the at least plurality one of trays and the rack to the first location.

~~29~~ 31. (CANCELED)

<sup>13</sup> 32. (CURRENTLY AMENDED) A method of preparing and transporting food for rethermalization comprising the steps of:

apportioning food onto at least a plurality one of trays;  
at a first location:

loading at least the plurality one of trays bearing the apportioned food onto a manually maneuverable rack for receiving and supporting the at least plurality one of trays;

loading the rack, containing the at least plurality one of trays, onto a refrigerated transport vehicle for transportation to a remote location from the first location;

transporting the rack, containing the at least plurality one of trays bearing the apportioned food, in the transport vehicle to the remote location;

at the remote location:

after the rack has been transported to the remote location in the transport vehicle, transferring the rack from the transport vehicle to a moveable receptacle, the receptacle being configured to receive at least one rack; and

activating at least one of a heating system and a cooling system to regenerate the apportioned food on the at least plurality one of trays on the rack that is positioned in the receptacle.

33-40. (CANCELED)

<sup>18</sup> 41. (PREVIOUSLY AMENDED) The method of claim 32, the manually maneuverable rack lacking any heating and cooling means and the moveable receptacle having a heating means and a cooling means.

09/928,546

*E*

~~49. (CANCELED)~~  
~~20. (PREVIOUSLY PRESENTED) The method of claim 32, further including the step of relocating the moveable receptacle to a desired location after the rack has been transferred from the transfer vehicle to the moveable receptacle.~~ 13